CURSE OF THE SPAWN

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18
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CONTAINS SOME COARSE LANGUAGE

Todd McFarlane & Image Comics presents...

CURSE OF THE SPAWN

Gutshot

Dedicated to Tim Tomas.

STORY ALAN McELROY

PENCILS DWAYNE TURNER

INKS CHANCE WOLF
DANNY MIKI
TODD McFARLANE

COPY EDITOR & LETTERING TOM ORZECHOWSKI

COLOR TODD BROEKER
MARK NICHOLAS

President of Entertainment Publishing & Licensing — Terry Fitzgerald

Executive Director for Image Comics — Larry Marder

Art Director & Designer — Brent Ashe

Graphics Coordinator — Julia Simmons

Editorial Coordinator — Melanie Simmons

Curse of the Spawn #17 Summary

Mafia mob boss Antonio Twistelli, experiences several hits. The first bomb, strapped to a small boy, killed several of Twistelli's friends and family at a wedding reception. Then, an anti-aircraft gun took out his money laundering warehouse, the cell phone cloning operation and his restaurant. When Twistelli calls the other mob bosses to find out who is after him and why, no one will get involved. Ultimately, Jason Wynn gives Twistelli the chilling news: he abused Overtkill, a prized plaything of a powerful Italian godfather. With nothing left to lose, Antonio Twistelli becomes a very dangerous man.

image

TODD McFARLANE PRODUCTIONS

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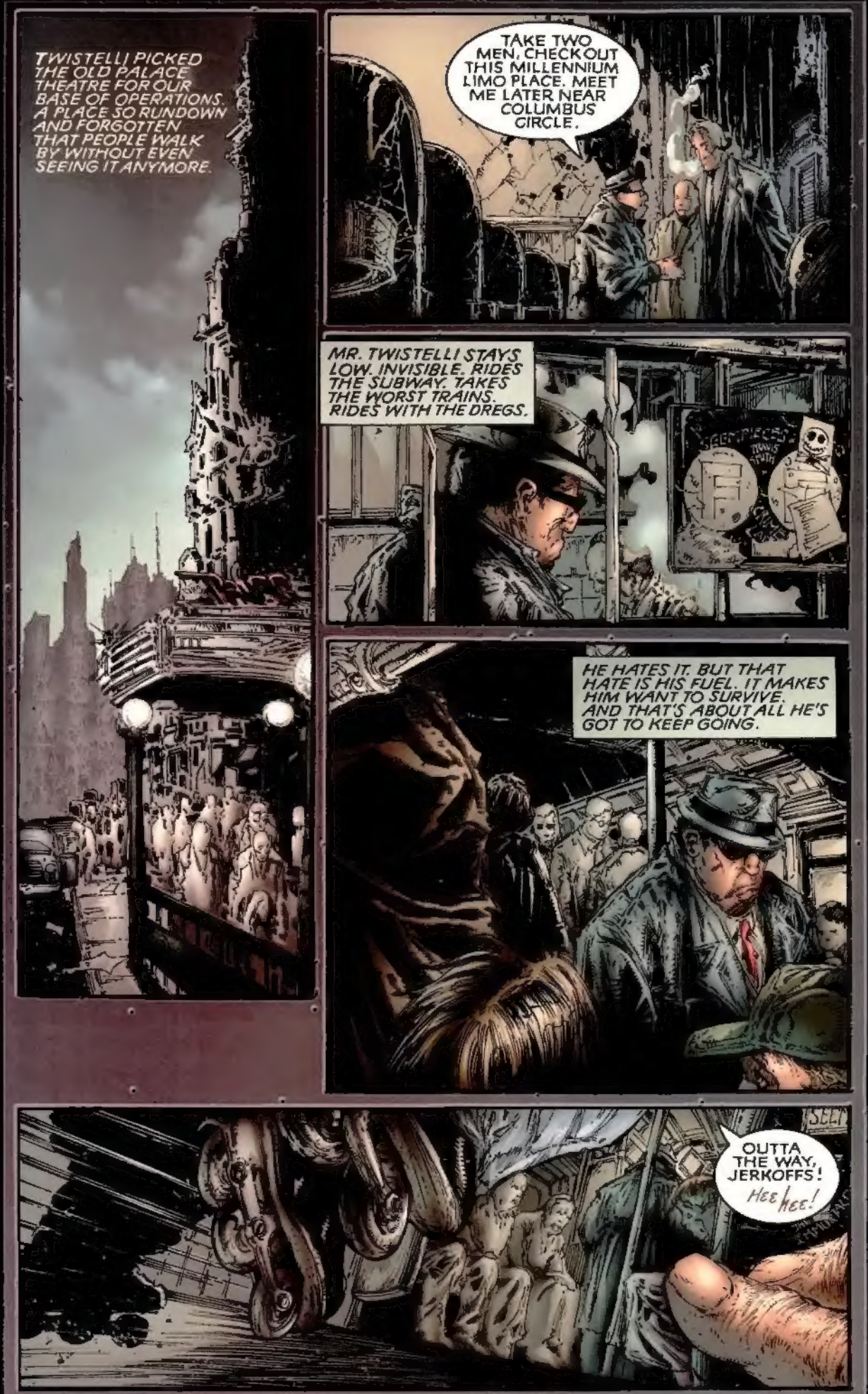
MY NAME IS VINCENT D'EGALLO. I WORK FOR A SICILIAN MOBSTER NAMED ANTONIO TWISTELLI.
RIGHT NOW, MR. TWISTELLI AND THE REST OF US, HIS CREW, ARE AT WAR.
KILLERS HAVE COME FROM ROME. THE WORST KIND. THE BEST KIND. AND THEIR SIGHTS ARE SET ON US.
TWISTELLI'S BEEN A LAZY FAT CAT IN NEW YORK FOR A LOT OF YEARS. BUT NOW THAT HE'S UNDER THE GUN... THE ROUGHNESS IS BACK. HE'S LEAN... BUT MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE... HE'S MEAN.
NO MORE... PLEASE...
DASH 2400
THIS SIDE UP
RAY ORSON'S A HACKER FROM THE OLD SCHOOL. THEY CALL HIM "THE BANK"-- SHORT FOR DATA BANK. HE KNOWS EVERYTHING. THIS IS HIS PLACE. RIGHT NOW, IT'S COVERED WITH HIS BLOOD.

TELL ME SOME INFO AND I'M GONE. OUTTA TOWN TALENT. REAL BADASSES... WHERE THEY HOLED UP?
I DON'T KNOW--
OH, YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE I CAN FIND THE SHITSTAINS BEEN WHACKIN' OUT MY MEN!
SMAK!
TURNIN' MY GODDAMN BUSINESS INTO GODDAMN CONFETTI!
KRAK
I'VE WATCHED TWISTELLI DO THIS ALL WEEK. HE KICKS THE CRAP OUTTA SOME SNITCH, LOWLIFE, WHATEVER. GUESS IT BEATS A TREADMILL.
THUNK!
KNOW HOW MANY BONES THERE ARE IN THE HUMAN BODY, ASSHOLE?! LET'S FIND OUT TOGETHER!
BASH!

HEY, BOSS. WHAT ABOUT THESE COMPUTERS?
WHAT ABOUT 'EM, VINCENT?!
WELL, THEY LOOK KIND OF EXPENSIVE.
AND SOMEBODY'S TAKEN REALLY GOOD CARE OF THEM.
No! I CAN FIND OUT WHAT YOU WANT-- JUST--
--PLEASE...
...DON'T SMASH THE PANADASH MICROSUN 2400/80. IT'S A ONE-OFF.
COMPUTER GEEKS... CHRIST.

HERE, YES--
TRAVEL RECORDS, DIPLOMATIC ENVOY PACKETS, CUSTOMS WAIVERS, LIMOUSINE CHARTERS.
WAIT.
HERE IT IS...
OKAY...
MILLENNIUM LIMOUSINE SERVICES.
WAIT... FLAG? OH... WHAT?
CRAP...
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE...
SOMETHING'S GOT ME ZEROED.
NO...
DAMOCLES SATELLITE TRACKING. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE PARTICLE WEAPONS PLATFORM.
MY GOD... IT'S DOING A BACKWASH...
...TRACKING!
WHAT'S HE BABBLING ABOUT?
WE NEED TO NOT BE HERE ANYMORE.
NO. IT'S OKAY, I CAN SHUNT THE SIGNAL. DO A FAST REROUTE BACK TO CRYSTAL PALACE OR FORT MEAD. GIVE 'EM ONE HECK OF A SURPRISE.
IT'LL ONLY TAKE A SEC... THEN I'M GOLDEN.
THE BEST.
YOU CAN TAKE THAT TO THE BANK--

ZNRRRAAM!
SONOFA*BITCH!* WHAT THE HELL WAS *THAT?*
PARTICLE BEAM FIRED FROM ORBIT, SIR. WE GOTTA GO.
SPACE WEAPONS... UNKILLABLE KILLERS. NO HELP FOR NOBODY!
I CAN'T WIN THIS WAR, VINCENT. I GOT NO ALLIES... I GOT NO CHANCE.
WE AIN'T DEAD YET, BOSS.
I WASN'T AS SURE AS I TRIED TO SOUND.


TWISTELLI PICKED THE OLD PALACE THEATRE FOR OUR BASE OF OPERATIONS. A PLACE SO RUNDOWN AND FORGOTTEN THAT PEOPLE WALK BY WITHOUT EVEN SEEING IT ANYMORE.
TAKE TWO MEN, CHECK OUT THIS MILLENNIUM LIMO PLACE. MEET ME LATER NEAR COLUMBUS CIRCLE.
MR. TWISTELLI STAYS LOW. INVISIBLE. RIDES THE SUBWAY. TAKES THE WORST TRAINS. RIDES WITH THE DREGS.
HE HATES IT. BUT THAT HATE IS HIS FUEL. IT MAKES HIM WANT TO SURVIVE. AND THAT'S ABOUT ALL HE'S GOT TO KEEP GOING.
OUTTA THE WAY, JERKOFFS! HEE HEE!

LOOKEE, WE GOT ONE DON'T WANNA PLAY! YOU GOT NO CHOICES, 'CAUSE NOW, WE WANT YO MONEY, YO ASS, AND YO FACE DOWN ON THE GROUND BEGGIN' US NOT TO CUT YO BALLS OFF.
THE BOSS LIVES FOR THESE KINDA MOMENTS. HE TELLS US ALL ABOUT IT OVER CHIANTI.
YOU WANNA PLAY!
KISSH
WELL, FIRST OFF, I HATE HEAD GAMES, DON'T YOU?! SO SCREW THAT.
SWAK
NOW, YOU DON'T SEE THAT EVERY DAY. BODY WALKIN' THREE, FOUR FEET WITH NO HEAD.
JUST LIKE A FRIGGIN' CHICKEN.

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IZZZ

St. PAT'S.
BLESS ME, FATHER, FOR I HAVE SINNED...

IT'S BEEN I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG SINCE MY LAST CONFESSION.
GO ON, MY SON.
I JUST KILLED TWO PUNKS ON THE SUBWAY BEFORE THAT IT'S BEEN HUNDREDS... SHIT, THOUSANDS. I'VE DONE DRUGS, SCREWED HOOKERS 'TIL MY JOHNSON'S ABOUT TO DROP OFF... DONE "A"-NUMBER-ONE EVIL BY THE FREAKIN' BUTTLOAD.
I'VE MOVED AWAY FROM MY FAMILY, MY PEOPLE, MADE TONS OF GREEN... BUT NOW GOD'S COME CALLING WITH HEAVILY ARMED ANGELS READY TO FRY MY ASS AND EVERYBODY IN ITS SHADOW. I NEED TO KNOW WHY!
WELL, MY SON...
MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE A FAT, DISGUSTING, MURDERING FORNICATOR WHO DESERVES NOTHING LESS THAN TO HAVE HIS NUTS AND EYEBALLS SWITCHED SO HE CAN SEE LIFE MORE CLEARLY!

GET OUTTA MY CONFESSIONAL, YOU PIECE OF SHIT!
YOU'RE A DISGRACE TO THE FAMILY NAME! YOUR SKIN SHOULD BURN IN THE SIGHT OF GOD!
YOU SHOULD BE ON YOUR KNEES BEGGING FORGIVENESS! BUT I'LL TELL YOU, IT'S NOT COMING!
BERNARDO, HEY, YOU WANNA RELAX!
I'LL RELAX WHEN YOU'RE DEAD, ANTONIO. I'D LOVE TO DO IT MYSELF... BUT GOD THE FATHER WON'T EXCUSE MY KILLING MY OWN BROTHER. NO MATTER HOW DAMNED HE ALREADY IS!

MILLENNIUM LIMOUSINE SERVICES.
LOOKS DESERTED.
CHECK THE SERVICE BAY. I'M GONNA HAVE A LOOK-SEE IN THE OFFICE.
IF YOU COME ACROSS FRANK BLACK LET ME KNOW.
WHO?
NEVER MIND.
CHEECHI. GO LEFT.
Huh.,
OWW.

KTCH!
CHEECH!
TEK

CRIPES... VINCENT! WE GOT US A...
GHKKK
YOU BITCH!
EEEHH!
SHUK

THWRA K!
NICE MOVES, BABE.
'COURSE, WITH US LIKE THIS, YOU CAN'T GET YOUR GUNS IN MY FACE. SO, LET'S TALK ABOUT YOUR BOSSES.

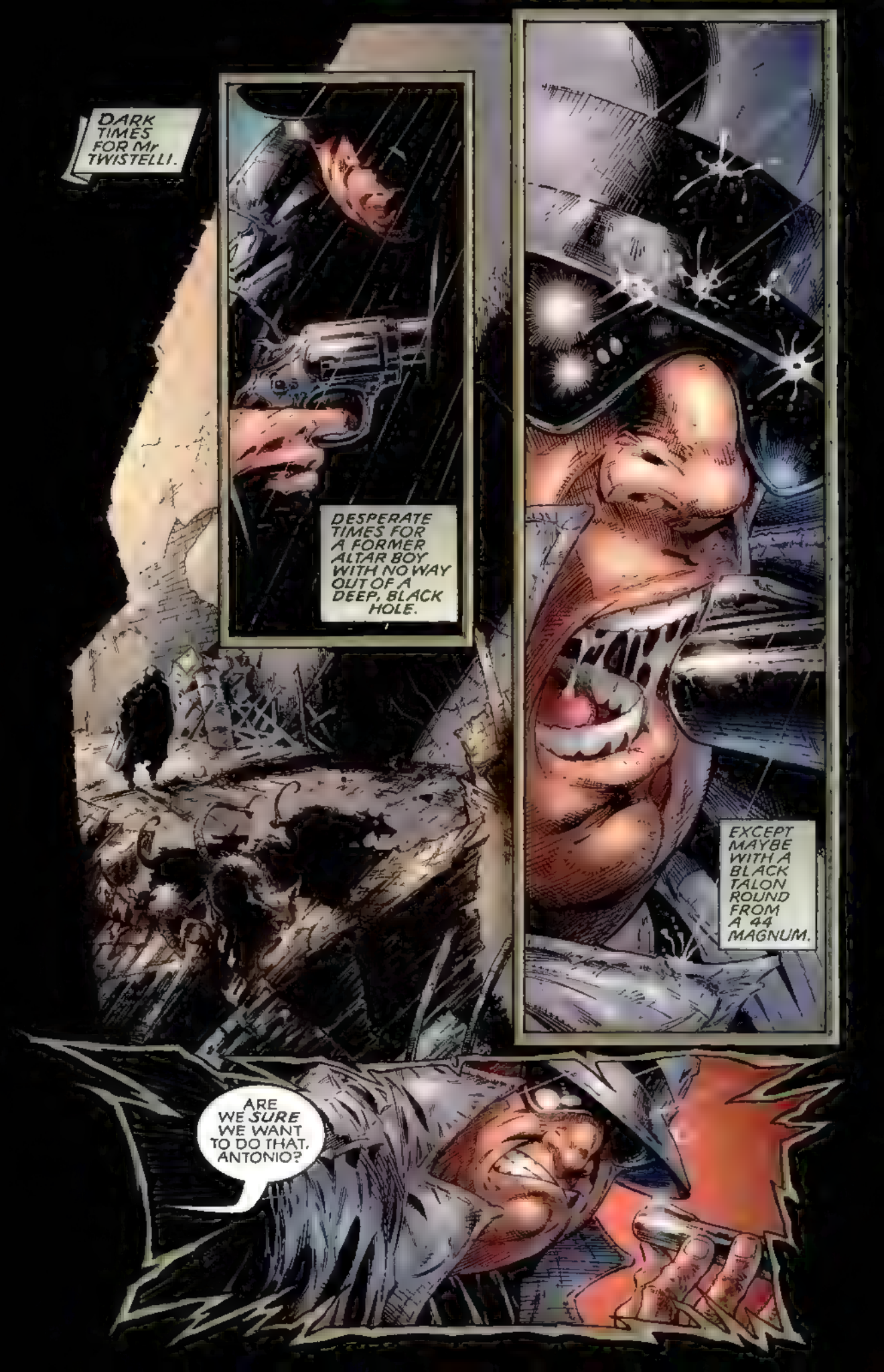
EAT THIS!
KOOA! KOOA!
WHERE ARE THEY? YOU'RE ONE OF THEIR POINT GUARDS, RIGHT? TALK AND I LEAVE YOU BREATHING.
EAT ME!
MOVE SHOULDA DAZED HER. INSTEAD IT JUST PISSED HER OFF.
VVVP
VVVP
VVVP
LOOKING FOR ME? NOW, WHERE ARE THE ASSASSINS?

KABOOM!

Szzzt
Koff Koff
WE'VE ALREADY COMMISSIONED A NEW LIMOUSINE SERVICE FOR THE REST OF OUR STAY.
GOOD. LET NEECE KNOW.

LOOK, BERNARDO, WE'RE BROTHERS.
DON'T REMIND ME.
WE'RE BLOOD, FOR CHRISSAKE... ok, SORRY. I'M IN TROUBLE HERE, ALL RIGHT? I NEED HELP. YOU THINK I'D COME TO YOU IF I WASN'T DESPERATE?
THEY HAVE MONEY, RESOURCES, CONNECTIONS, AND NO ONE STANDS AGAINST THEM. LEAST OF ALL A TWO-BIT THUG LIKE YOU, ANTONIO.
THANKS A LOT. TELL ME, IS THIS COMING FROM THE DON OF DONS, LUCIANO BARTINO? BECAUSE IF THIS IS ALL ABOUT OVERTKILL, I CAN FIND WAYS TO MAKE RESTITUTION THAT DON'T INVOLVE A EULOGY.
YOU *ARE* PATHETIC WHEN YOU'RE HELPLESS. OKAY, YOU'VE GOT THE VATICAN SECRET POLICE AFTER YOU. THEY ARE, WITHOUT A DOUBT, THE MOST COVERT, RUTHLESS, AND DEADLY ORGANIZATION ON EARTH.
THAT'S WHO I THOUGHT IT WAS.

I SHOULDN'T BE TELLING YOU THIS, BUT... IT'S NOT YOU THEY'RE AFTER. THEY WANT SOMEBODY IN YOUR ORGANIZATION
WHO, I'LL GIVE HIM UP ON A SILVER PLATTER.
SUCH LOYALTY. IT SEEMS ONE OF YOUR TRUSTED LIEUTENANTS IS A MEMBER OF THE ANCIENT AND EXCOMMUNICATED ORDER OF THE *KNIGHTS TEMPLAR*.
THEY WERE CRUSADERS FOR THE CROSS A THOUSAND YEARS AGO AND STILL EXIST IN SECRET TODAY.
HE'S BEEN SENT TO FIND AND CONVERT A SHADOWY NON-BELIEVER SAID TO LIVE IN THE DEEPEST DARKEST ALLEYWAYS OF NEW YORK CITY...
...ONE CALLED *SPAWN*.
WE'VE MET.
THE V.S.P. ARE HERE TO STOP THE KNIGHT FROM COMPLETING HIS TASK. THEY DON'T KNOW WHO HE IS-- ALL THEY KNOW IS HE'S PART OF YOUR SYNDICATE
SO THE BASTARDS ARE GONNA WIPE OUT EVERYBODY THAT WAY THEY DON'T MISS. I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS SHIT... LOOK, CALL THE BISHOP IN ROME... GET HIM TO CALL OFF THE V.S.P. ... THERE'S *GOTTA* BE ANOTHER WAY.
I CAN'T DO THAT... EVEN IF I WANTED TO.
WHICH I DON'T.
SEE YOU AROUND, BROTHER. AND STAY THE HELL OUTTA MY CHURCH.


DARK TIMES FOR Mr TWISTELLI.
DESPERATE TIMES FOR A FORMER ALTAR BOY WITH NO WAY OUT OF A DEEP, BLACK HOLE.
EXCEPT MAYBE WITH A BLACK TALON ROUND FROM A 44 MAGNUM.
ARE WE *SURE* WE WANT TO DO THAT, ANTONIO?

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BlahBlahBlah

BlahBlahBlah_65
w/terry fitzgerald
tdfitz@aol.com

Well Todd and I made it back from Tokyo in one piece. I actually stayed there five days longer and was lucky enough to get up to Nagano to see the Olympic Village and events. (Met the women's Swedish hockey team too but that's another story...)

We were there to do a round of interviews with what seemed like every newspaper, magazine, and TV station in Japan, including CNN and MTV. The movie has since opened in the "land of the rising sun", to a number three ranking behind the ass-kicking Titanic, and some native feature. We have a lot of fanatical fans in Japan as we do here, and we were glad to see them hit the theaters opening week. just like here as well. "Domo arigato", to everyone who saw it.

What else has happened in the last month? I no longer am working at the HQ of the McFarlane empire in Phoenix. Did I quit the company? Not quite. Ted Adams and Deborah Marvin, both ex-WildStorm employees, (Deb hasn't been there for over three years) have joined me in the latest exploits of Toddy Mac, at a new company in Los Angeles, entitled Todd McFarlane Entertainment.

With the sequel to the movie in the works, as well as the continuing HBO animated series, we thought it was time to make our presence known in the "land of entertainment", i.e. Hollywood. We are also interested in pitching a few other ideas to other studios and TV companies. We have a killer sitcom idea! Be prepared to read about our upcoming entertainment highlights in future blahs.

The Spawn movie video will hit "sell through" price, i.e. less than $20, on May 5th. Be prepared to see a big push media wise. with certain major chain stores having "special" prices and one certain chain that I can't mention, having uniquely created a Spawn chromium giveaway card, with purchase of the video. Both versions of the movie, the regular PG-13 and the R rated "Director's Cut" will be released at sell through, so make sure you pick up the one most suited to your taste. (Meaning pick up the "R" and hide it from Mom)

As for the HBO animated series, the next set of six figures are scheduled to hit the air on.. May 15th! Like last year, they will run Friday nights at midnight, for six straight weeks, with the possibility of re-airing at another time and another night. Check them out, you won't be disappointed.

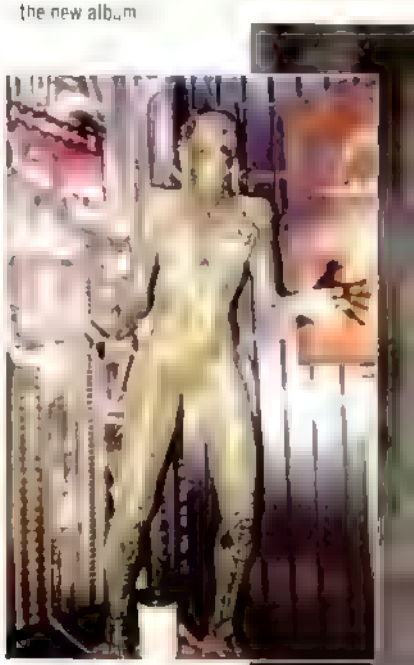
Lastly, we were all in NY last month for Toy Fair '98 to introduce this years line of figures from McFarlane Toys. Calendar year 1998 will feature the second line of KISS toys from the Psycho Circus, the X Files movie toys, more Monsters and of course more Spawn. Check out this months "End Cap" and subsequent ones for more exact information.

But, as pictured, the toys designers did a bang up job designing the toy booth space this year. They created a circus tent complete with gorilla and disco mirror ball for KISS, a really cool, high-tech tunnel for X-Files, a lab environment for the Monsters, and as pictured here, "Freddy" clawing his way through someone's front door and "Eve" from Species II. Both Freddy and Eve will appear in a new line of toys, entitled Movie Maniacs. Freddy will appear with Jason from "Friday the 13th", as well as Eve and her "boyfriend" from Species II.

There will also be additional characters from other slasher flicks that will be announced at a later date.

-best, terry fitzgerald

p.s. Pick up the new Marilyn Manson autobiography this month, it's a great read for fans or foe alike. Can't wait to hear more of the new album.



Curse Words
P.O. Box 27228 Tempe AZ 85285-7228
www.spawn.com

Hi Todd,

I just purchased the Spawn live act on DVD. Wow! This is a true home theater experience. Hats off to yourself, New Line and everyone else involved in putting this great package together. This is a standard all DVD's should follow: audio commentaries, trailers, a making of feature, sketch gallery, animated menus, music videos (including the hidden Marilyn Manson/Sneaker Pimps video, very cool!). All for a bargain list price of $24.98. Currently the VHS Version is much more expensive and has none of these special features.

The HBO animated DVD and laser disc is also loaded. I really enjoyed the audio commentary on both the live action and animated DVD's. Thanks to yourself and all involved for giving DVD fans all the extras. I won't give away how to find the hidden Marilyn Manson/Sneaker Pimps video on the live action DVD because it will ruin the fun of finding it. Keep up the quality with future DVD's and laser discs!

Dean Lundberg, Age 33
Omaha, Nebraska

Obviously, because of technology, with each one of the formats I bring Spawn out in, I'm able to do something a little different. In the case of the DVD, it's still a fairly new electronic toy that isn't very wide spread. Because the disks can hold so much more information than a laser disc or a standard video tape, it is forcing a lot of companies to be a little creative in filling up the space after the movie is done.

It was very intuitive of you to find the Marilyn Manson video but I think Terry Fitzgerald has already blown the gig in one of his "blah blah blah" columns. If not, then we'll give the secret away after a while. Glad you enjoyed it. Stay tuned for the second season of HBO coming out in May.

Dear Curse Words,

I found the two part series in Issues #15 and #16 to be very interesting. It was a unique perspective point from which to see the Spawn origin of Al Simmons. The art work was terrific, as was the story. Speaking of which, on page 16, you have a couple of crabs chasing demons with the crabs chanting "D dda Chick, Dadda chum." Unless I've fallen off the path of the beam, this has got to be a reference to the "Lobstrosities" from Stephen King's Drawing Of the Three from his Dark Tower epic. Am I right or what?

Thanks,
Kerry Day
Oxnard, California

Glad you liked the book! It was a blast making up Abe and working with the Total Chaos characters. And you really do have a good sense of the path of the beam. That was indeed a homage to the buggers who took Roland's fingers. Thanks for writing in.

Best regards,
Brian Haberlin

Dear Mr. McFarlane,

I am a student at Tom Baines School in Calgary, Alberta. I am writing to you regarding a school project for social studies. All students have to choose a company and compile a business history of that company which we will later compare information about how companies are formed.

I have chosen your company because it is of great interest to me. I especially like the Spawn comics series and feel that one of the best series you did was Torment which paved the way for a whole new Spiderman era. I did a previous project in social studies on that and I was able to get information from your dad. That was a neat experience.

What I require is information about the history of McFarlane toys, how you got started, the structure of your company and anything else you may feel might help my projects. Could you also share any informat on about the future of Spawn?

I thank you in advance for your assistance and remain a very devoted reader.

Sincerely,
Nathan Hupman
Calgary, Alberta

To some degree, there really is no magic in starting your own company. You just need a lot of ambition and working capital and at that point you can manufacture anything you want. What's more difficult is being more than a minor player or a fly-by-night company. My goal with Spawn and any of my products is to show them to the world and find ways to get them out there to that big place. There are a lot of companies starting up out there that are manufacturing one or two toys, doing an average job at best and trying to over-hype them as more than what they actually are. The growing pains that come with staying in business over the years, if you can survive them, are also the same things that will make you a better company. I think you can see we have tried to improve on the products from year to year. We're not resting on our laurels as we try and find new and interesting ways to put out these figurines.

Also, when you go out and take on other licenses, you become more and more comfortable with them after a while and then you can improve on them. For instance, I believe the second line of KISS toys is far more interesting than the first line of toys. Although we're doing the X-Files toys to the best of our abilities, the things we learn on the first go around will help us improve upon the second line. I can also say the same for our second Total Chaos line and our Classic Monster lines.

Pleasant Greetings,

First and foremost I would like to thank you for everything that you have bestowed upon our lives. My question concerns the fact that when presented under black light, some of the packaging tends to give off either a green glow or a white glow. Some even have a combination of both. That is, when the molded plastic around the figure is white and the outer protective plastic is green. To the art collector who does not open their toys, it aesthetically adds flare to the collection. Is this method employed intentionally? If so, it would be gratifying to see future product implemented with the latter combo.

I'm sure you get many ideas thrown at you so here is one involving children. At all the major retail department stores, there are play rides that require a couple of quarters to activate. A child sits in it and the contraption begins to move about in various directions. Anyway you probably know what I am referring to. Recently I saw one with Spiderman where a child sits along side the figure and the small car moves back and forth. Immediately I thought of Spawn and the Spawnmobile. I would love to see my child sitting next to Spawn in the Spawnmobile. I was wondering if you had any comment on that?

I thank you very much for giving me something to collect, memories

Voraciously,
Roman Ferrer
Sunnyside, Washington

Actually, I have seen the ride you are speaking of given the fact that I have a three and a six year old. I seriously doubt if I'll do anything along these lines with the Spawn character because I really don't want him perceived as something for little kids. If anything, I'm striving to make Spawn edgier in the future. You'll see that it in the HBO series season two and in the movie sequel which will probably be R rated

As for the packaging, I hate to say it but it was either a coincidence or an accident. It isn't something we knew would happen in advance.

Todd McFarlane

My name is Kevin Barker. I live in Cabot Arkansas. My son reads and draws pictures out of your comic book. He really enjoys your comic book, Curse of the Spawn. We have seen the movie together. I thought the movie to be more of a comic. My son enjoyed the action.

My son took one of your comic books to school without us knowing it. The same day this happened I was called by the school and told that my son had brought pornography to school. I asked them what he had. They told me a Spawn comic book. I told them that it was not pornography but they said it was nothing but pornography and told us that all we were doing is giving our son pornography. They suspended my son for two days over the comic book. My son is eleven years old but he understands the difference between things. I tried to make them understand that your comic book is not pornography. The school is saying and telling us that you are selling pornography to children. At this time I am trying to get them to change what they have said about my son and us being pornographers.

The problem with the school on this issue goes a whole lot deeper than I can tell you in a letter. I am fighting for your comic book and you and also for my wife and my son and myself because I feel that my son has not done anything wrong nor have we by buying the comic book. I do not feel that there is anything wrong with the comic book. It tells a story between heaven and hell. The Bible also speaks of a battle between heaven and hell. We are God fearing people. I have also faxed you a copy of the Behavior Document that shows where they have said your comic book is pornography.

They also said that my son had a mental problem because he draws the pictures out of the comic book. I have also faxed you one of his pictures he draws. My son asked me to tell you that he would really like to meet you in person.

Thank you.
Kevin & Sheila Barker
Cabot, Arkansas

It's often been said that perception becomes reality. What this means is that if people believe something to be true regardless if it is or not then that's what they believe the facts of the matter are. Let me give you my perception of why this happens and I would venture to say the vast majority of the country would agree with me. Let me preface what I'm about to say with my first question which was "Where do these people live?" The reason I asked that question was because my stereotype knee-jerk reaction is that 'they must be in one of those bible belt states.' Given that you are from Arkansas, I hit that on the head. Now the perception of the bible belt is that it is congested with a bunch of God fearing, ultra-conservatives or right wingers. I affectionately refer to them as a bunch of tight asses. I see their way of living as not minding their own business. They try to tell others how to live their lives. Ignorance breeds fear and most of it comes from not understanding what they're looking at or what they are talking about. Once fear has been set, then they blanket anyone involved with the segment they don't understand because it allows them to put people and things in boxes so their judgmental lives can be justified.

Although I disagree 100% on the labeling of my book and more so by outsiders dictating what we should or should not be reading, the fact of the matter is that small communities set standards that are appropriate for themselves. Meaning, if the principal is short-sighted and close-minded then there is usually very little you can talk to him or reason with him about that will change his mind. Again, because he would have to address the fact that he is ignorant about the problem he is dealing with and has already made a sweeping judgment based on no constructive knowledge. This is, in my view, why wars, racism and bigotry exist in the world and all you can do as an individual is to stand up for your beliefs as much as you do and do the best for your family in spite of the pressure around you. I've made a living doing just that. My patience with small thinkers is very short. Let me know how it turns out. I wish you luck.

To Todd McFarlane (the big cheese at Image)

How to get new comic readers? Good question and here's my answer:

Advertise in computer magazines, rock magazines, men's magazines, FHM, Q, Loaded, etcetera. Advertise on TV and radio. Tour colleges, universities and schools. Spread the word. It's no good advertising in fellow comic books if the kids don't know about comic shops or comics if they don't care or don't know they exist!

Run a campaign: What can you look at anywhere, put it in your jacket, look at on the bus, in the park, around your friend's house? What's full of wonder, thrills you, what's collectable, what has thrilled generations? What is a true American art form? Gameboy? No. Tomagotchi? No. Comics!

When you are doing a game, put classic pages of your comics on the CD-Rom and say this is what's waiting for you every month at your local comic shop.

Make them cheap. Save the glossy paper for collector's additions. Too many companies rely on their comics looking the same. The covers all blend too much. In the old days (1970's) when I was a kid, you could tell a DC Comic from a Marvel comic. You could tell a Kirby book from a Curt Swan book or a John Byrne book from Gene Colan. The books today all look the same which is another bad idea. Too many artists are drawing the same, big pictures with power, but where's the story? To see how things should be done, look at Alan Davis' FF. The emotion in the faces, the clean line art, (I was told at college that less is more!) and good story telling. The same thing with Garney's Captain America. Hope this helps.

Regards,
Jon Haward
Lowestoft, Suffolk, UK

I agree with almost everything you just said. Unfortunately, most small comic companies don't have the resources to do what you suggested. The implementation must come from the top and those that are capable of doing it (i.e. Marvel, DC, and Image comics). If we are to lead the way into the 21st century, it must be in a way that is a lot more diverse and creative than the last 25 years. As much as we like to cling to the old ways, the fact of the matter is most comic books have lost 90% of their sales in the last 5 years. That's a fact. Yet we continue to market, promote, draw, hype and sell the books exactly the same way even though the deterioration of sales is staring us boldly in the face. The problem we have in our market place is we're putting out the same kind of product and promoting it in stores and presenting it to the public in a way that makes us a bastard entertainment medium in the eyes of most people. Yet we continue to do nothing about it. It's one of the reasons why I continue to diversify my companies so I will have options in the future to take my ideas to not only the comic book community but to the world.

Short term thinking for a quick buck has now put all of us in a precarious position that doesn't seem to be getting any better and unfortunately the argument is very circular. It goes something like this: I need money because I made some short term decisions. Why did I make short term decisions? Because I needed the money but I didn't make any money because I made short term decisions. Therefore, I need to make short term decisions to correct the problem of getting money. It's an argument that can't be won and since most people are living that way in the comic book business, it's also something they are very blind to.

I'll offer up an example on how not to take every penny you can and how long term thinking can actually work. My example is me. Somehow I've been able to figure out a way to not raise the price of my books in six years and not have twenty knock offs of my book, figured a way to not cheat the public and over-hype what I've got. Although I'm not particularly enamored with the fact that I have toys, a movie and a TV series, I was able to get all three of them by not trying so hard. Most people will say that I'm just a freak, fluke or aberration and that the time, effort and hard work I've put in to creating my franchise has no merit because lightening won't strike twice. The only way to get to where I'm at is to take the short cuts, which is short term thinking, which leads you back to the circular argument. I do what I do and they do what they do and I let the results speak for themselves.

EndCap 70

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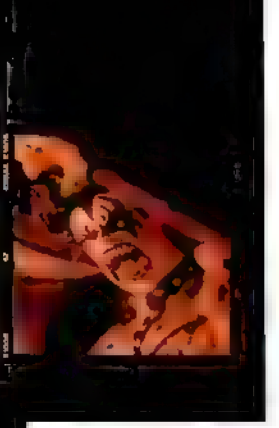

Mail, Missives, and Messages

Chad Stuart from sunset net asked about an old figure that he found. It was Pilot Spawn on a Chaos card, and he wanted to know how it happened. It's not a variation, that type of accident is just a rare blunder from the factory. When the pieces come down the factory in their bubble. It's easy to glue the wrong card on. While some collectors like to save these mistakes most would rather see the figure on the correct card.

Ryan Sutherland from Peterborough Ontario liked the cloth cape of the Spawn 3 figure (currently back in stores for a limited time). He suggested a rubber cape with a wire in it for maximum posability. Actually, we've already done Spawn like that! The 13" Spawn figure from a year ago had this feature. We're always trying to improve the look of our toys, and will use whatever material we think look best for each figure. Thus some may have cloth capes and others may have rubber or hard vinyl. Whatever it's made from, we hope you'll agree that it was the right choice for that particular toy.

Gerardo Sanchez Guerra from Nuevo Leon Mexico wrote that he had discovered many of our figures on Spanish cards, and wanted to know if they were as collectable as they were on the English cards. Most Americans collect the English cards because that's all they can find. The foreign-language cards are rarer than the English ones since the market is smaller, but if someone already has the rest of their collection in English they may be reluctant to get a Spanish version. The same is true with the Canadian cards that come with French writing. But of course, if someone is going to OPEN the card and play with the toy it doesn't matter WHAT language the card was in.

Just in Eolis from batman.com sent an e-mail asking why we stopped making toys from other Image comics. Well, we've got a pretty full slate of figures already scheduled for this year. But just because we don't have something planned for the near future doesn't mean we'll never do it. There are just so many series we can come out with in a period, and our talented sculptors are already working all year around. We also received a lot of ideas from the recent survey in the Toy Club, and will be evaluating the suggestions soon.

J. Steve Tucker of the Oklahoma KISS Army wanted to know which version of the KISS figures has more long term collectability: the ones with the albums or the ones with the letters? This is something that only time will tell. Would you rather collect Paul Stanley with a mini version of his solo album, or with a letter? The letter looks cool as part of the set, and the album looks cool as an individual toy. That's one reason we gave YOU the choice by making both versions.

Richard Dorsey from Edmonton Alberta typed us a letter mentioning that he stores his carded figures on pegboard installed in his spare bedroom. So far he's had no problems with the hook or the card weakening. He had many questions, which we can answer in order: 1) We don't give out production numbers on any figures, either limited edition or regular series. 2) There are no plans at this time for any more JPC promotions like the Red Violators 3. We don't like to make ANY toy exclusive to just one country like Japan or Canada... or even America. That is why we started up the mail-order McFarlane Toys Collector's Club. This eventually gives everyone in the WORLD a chance to get the figures. 4. All the McFarlane action figures since last summer have come with peg-holes in the feet, so they can be used on standard bases. For the questions and the tip on storage he wins this month's free limited edition Green Cosmic Angela.

Next Month: A close look at the Manga Two series!

International Toy Fair 1998. by Beau Smith

The pro Bowl of the toy industry. This is the time and place where all the major toy companies present their latest toys for the year.

As McFarlane Toys we were there. We brought a circus, a space ship, a monster laboratory, maniacs from the movies, and a morgue full of new Spawn action figures. All for 1998. All for you.

This year the world of McFarlane Toys has expanded. We had a brand new showroom that lured toy buyers and media representatives into a realm of different worlds, each with their own incredible themes.

The first world they entered was the Psycho Circus. There, the four spirits of KISS were displayed in their own forms straight from the pages of the comic book KISS Psycho Circus. They were all captured in a real circus tent complete with a caged ape and plenty of bananas.

From there the toy fair attendees were shuttled into an alien space craft, where the Alien movie Ultra Action Figures were shrouded in fog and secrecy in our own Area 51. Agents Mulder and Scully seemed so life-like that you wondered if they were going to ask you for your I.D. badges.

The next leg of the journey took your through swamp and mist into the dark McFarlane Monster Lab. There, a whole new slew of odd and creepy monsters awaited. The Sea Creature was displayed waving the arm of an unlucky diver, the Phantom of the Opera was playing his favorite tunes and the Mummy kicked up the sands of time with his walking and wail. It was a real monster party for all in attendance.

One avenue over, we walked up on Elm Street right in time for Friday the 13th-eth. Jason and Freddy Krueger were there in great force. No one chose to shake Freddy's hand after all he does have a "hang nail" problem. The Adam and Eve of alien DNA were there representing the toys from this summer's movie, Species II. They are not the cutest couple to behold but will be fun to play with.

The Spawn Manga II line brought a real international flavor to the show. With more detail and ornate sculpting, the play action has been enhanced this year and the entire line looks to follow last year's sell out success.

Next we were thrown back in time to Spawn, the Dark Age. Without a doubt, this is the best sculpted and painted line we've done to date. Figures like The Spellcaster, The Ogre, The Horrific, The Raider and Spawn, The Black Knight will keep the light on in a lot of houses in 1998. Rounding out the line is The Skull Queen who has to be the best female figure we have done yet and comes loaded with accessories. This line took everyone's breath away...and didn't give it back.

The last leg of the showroom tour debuted the Spawn Series 12 line for this fall. The ghastly Re-Animated Spawn with body pod wings makes the flying monkeys from the Wizard Of Oz look like docile pets. The Heap rises from the muck of Spawn alley to remind people that he has one of gross-ness action to show you. Greg Capullo's very popular character, the Creech was featured in all his massive glory along with everyone's favorite cybernetic Ape, Cy-Gor and this year he brought along a little friend. Luckily no one tried to feed them.

1998 should prove to be our most exciting year to date. Don't think just because we've already put out the Spawn movie that we've run out of ideas. Hardly! In May of 1998 we will start our second season of the popular HBO Spawn Animated Series. There will be more story twists and more surprises than ever before. All of this will bring our characters and toys in direct line with the public. With great licensed properties like The X-Files, Movie Maniacs and the Spawn created lines, McFarlane Toys will be the talk of Toy Town!

MIDNITE ON MAY 15TH

TODD MCFARLANE'S

Spawn

101

Todd McFarlane's Spawn, HBO's smash animated series, returns for its second season this May. We recently had an opportunity to get a behind-the-scenes look at the production of season two and had a chance to talk to two of the most influential people behind the show.

Eric Radomski, the Supervising Director for both season one and season two, has a long history in animation. His credits include Tiny Toon Adventures, Batman: The Animated Series, and Spicy City. We asked Eric to tell us about the creative process behind animation.

"The first step is always the script. With writers who haven't worked in animation, there's always a learning curve. We don't want writers who think only about animation, we want writers to write dramas, but they also have to be aware of what works and doesn't work for animation. As we begin production we've got to have final scripts because if you're making changes in the middle of storyboarding, it can be very costly."

"Once everybody signs off on the scripts, they go to storyboarding where the directors, in the best of cases, are left alone to interpret those scripts into storyboard fashion. This is where they visually tell the story. We then go through a process of animatics, where we record the voices according to the script and marry it together with the storyboard. Next we present it to HBO as a working rough of what the stories are going to be."

"Once the animatic is approved, we design the elements for the episodes including the characters, props, vehicles

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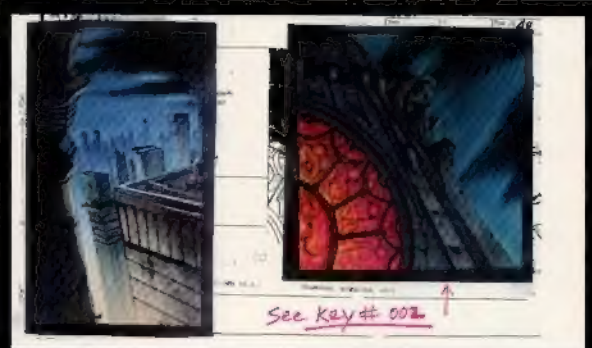

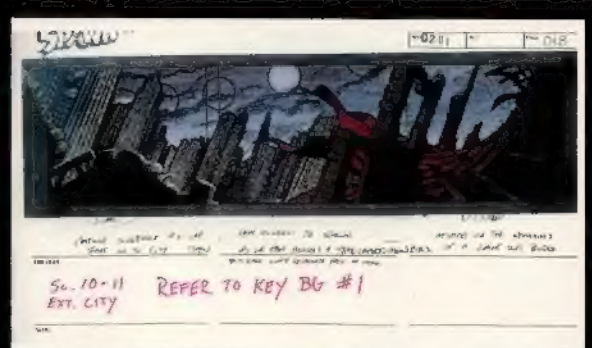

and backgrounds. Once those elements are approved by myself and Todd, exposure sheets are done which account for all of the individual animation frames and dialogue and describe what action happens where. Then we package everything up for overseas. The overseas studio puts it into production for about 16 weeks of animation. This goes from animation through camerawork. Once the film is done, it comes back into the states and into the studio. We assemble it and make a pass at an edited version which is presented to HBO and Todd for approval before we go into a final edit. Then I go back in and add all the whistles and bells."

"Once everybody is locked in on that, we get together with the music and sound effects people and come up with what sort of atmosphere we want to create with music and sound. They go off for a couple of weeks and create those elements and then we get back together for a mix. Finally, we take all the elements and marry it to the finished picture. Once we've pulled all that together, we add the head and tail credits and present it to HBO and Todd. If they're happy, we've got a finished episode."

We learned that a different animation studio was used for the second series and Eric explains why. "The first season was split between two different units within the same studio in Seoul. Most work overseas is done as subcontract. We were with one main group who was the touchstone for the overseas studios but they had subcontracted to two smaller, individual studios. We met and kept in contact with them but were still pretty unhappy with one of the groups. In the end, we had to remedy two episodes as quickly as we could. I think it was ultimately a mutual agreement that it would be too much work for them to give us what we wanted in the second season."

"So we looked around and found a different group, a co-venture basically between Japan and Korea. It's a group that has worked together in the past on several Japanese features. The Japanese group supervises and the Korean group actually executes the production. We bring the product over, discuss it with the Japanese and Korean directors and then it's actually produced in Korea but with the Japanese group responsible for bringing what we want visually to film. It was a choice to increase the quality and maintain more control over what we were going to get back from overseas."

In addition to the new animation studio, other changes were made from season one to season two. Everyone agreed that season one was a critical and commercial success but they still knew that there were areas where they could improve. As Eric says, "There's a natural evolution for animation when you have a new show. It's new art direction and a new audience. It takes you a few seasons to hit a groove. You need to get the style down and figure out how to best tell the stories, use the characters and develop the personalities. In this case, we had an existing character and world based on Todd's comic that gave us a lot to go by and certainly helped give us a good jump start with the first season. But it's to be expected that you're going to have bumps and bruises along the way. Certainly there were a couple of episodes in the first season I wasn't happy with visually because our studio overseas did not deliver what we had hoped. However, a couple of the other episodes in the first season really nailed, as close as we could have expected, the art direction that we wanted for the series. In that regard, the second season has really hit a groove and we're working off of the best of the first season. The worst of the second season is better than the best of the first season. We certainly know what worked and improved upon what didn't work going forward into the second season."

"Creatively and story-telling-wise, as requested by HBO, the second season has a more linear, individual episodic feel to it. There are storylines that carry through all six episodes, but it's not as intricate as the first season was. Again, the art direction is a little more realized. The new studio overseas and the Japanese Supervising Director is bringing a bit more of the anime/manga influence that Todd has asked for. You're going to see something that looks a lot more expensive than it actually was."

"Storywise, we've picked up from the first season but we've gone on a lateral move with the Terry Fitzgerald character becoming the lead throughout the six. He's on the run for the next six episodes because he's found some information that will condemn the murderers of Al Simmons. That has certainly taken us into a different area because we're not dealing with all the dark villains we had in the first season. We're focusing more on the intrigue of the story instead of establishing characters that, in the first season, were introduced in the first part of the episode and then died at the end of the episode."

"So it has been an evolution. We picked up on the art direction, including some of the things Todd wanted to push in the second season, and it does show up on the screen. The series is looking really good this season."

We also met with John Leekley, the series' Co-Executive Producer and the writer for the second half of season two and all of season three. This is the first animated series that John has written, but he has worked on many television series and movies, including creating and executive producing the television series, The Kindred. Some of his other credits include the four-hour miniseries Night Sins starring Valerie Bertinelli and Harry Hamlin and the movie She Fought Alone starring Tiffani-Amber Thiessen.

We asked John when he began working on Todd McFarlane's Spawn and he explained, "The second season is broken into two parts. The first part includes episodes 2.01 through 2.06 and the second half of season two is 2.07 to 2.12. I was hired to be the Co-Executive Producer and write the episodes starting with 2.07. I asked Rebekah (Bradford) if she would join me in this effort and I'm very grateful that she did. We began our work in terms of writing and producing with 2.07. All six of those shows were written by us--five by myself and one by her; although Rebekah was involved in the writing of all of them, in her role as Story Editor."

"When we finished writing 2.07 to 2.12, HBO asked us, since they were enormously pleased with those scripts compared to previous scripts, if we would go back and completely rewrite the episodes that were already animated, episodes 2.01 to 2.06. It is obviously extremely difficult to write an episode that has already been made. It's like trying to write a movie that has already been shot, but we took on that task because so much depended on those early episodes being really good. HBO will decide whether or not to proceed with Spawn based on those early episodes, which are going to start airing May 15. Ironically, the HBO decision whether or not to proceed into a third season will be largely dependent on episodes I had nothing to do with making, writing, producing or anything. But I felt my responsibility to the show and to Todd, was to make those shows excellent. In terms of animation they were excellent, they were much better than the first season but that's a little bit like saying a film is well shot. A lot of films are well shot but almost no films have well told stories. That's why most films are a waste of time and unsuccessful. They can be lovely to look at and interestingly shot but they don't work unless there's a great story and great characters. That's why Rebekah and I went back and almost entirely rewrote 2.01 and 2.02 with new storylines and new characterizations. It sounds impossible but it actually worked out very well. Because so much of the dialogue was off-panel, in other words the dialogue was happening when we weren't seeing people's mouths moving, we could lay in entire stories, characterizations, and dialogue to things that were already animated. I believe that 2.01 and 2.02 are as good as they can possibly be having been given the assignment of rewriting when they were already made. I feel confident that HBO will proceed with Spawn based on those episodes."

Since John wasn't involved with the first season, we asked him what differences he saw between the first and second seasons. He said, "I guess the most important thing to say is that starting with episode 2.07 the show is going to be a drama first. The fact that it is animated is incidental. It is a drama, and with every season that goes by it is going to be more and more of an excellent drama. I intend to make it one of the best dramas on television. Adult drama is not based on titillation, T and A or violence, but rather it is based on strong characterization, strong storylines and strong drama. So that's the difference starting with episode 2.07. What had happened before was, an attempt was made to produce a show that was animated first and then given a story later. That did not work and won't work. The animation has to be excellent and it is. A great job is being done by everyone working on the animation. But what is necessary is to have the storytelling drive the show. Television is a writer driven medium, particularly series television and I feel very enthusiastic about this show. Its been so much fun to make this show. It's very seldom that victories are this clear cut but you can tell by the enthusiasm from the actors, the enthusiasm from HBO and the passion of everyone involved, they know they're on to something very special."

Look for more behind-the-scenes information in the next issue of Spawn as we take you to a recording session and talk to the actors that bring Todd McFarlane's Spawn to life.

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